

## Community Mapping in *Bateyes*

*“The maps will help us in the future so that the government will take us into account in development plans.”*

Altagracia Feliciano, a health promoter in Batey Esperanza, Dominican Republic, recently participated in a community mapping exercise conducted by the PRIME II Project as part of a new reproductive health program in the country’s *bateyes*. Home to former sugar cane workers displaced when the industry was privatized, the *bateyes* are characterized by substandard living conditions.

Mapping the houses in the seven *bateyes* where PRIME II will work was an integral component of baseline activities for the future evaluation of the program. The maps will also be used to designate which households will be served by each of the health promoters who will be trained through the intervention. But for Ms. Feliciano and the other promoters, who drew the first versions of the maps with technical assistance from PRIME, the maps quickly assumed broader significance. Provincial agencies involved in delivering a variety of services are interested in using the maps, and mayors and community officials have requested copies.

Residents of the *bateyes* also became active in the mapping process, which commenced with the spectacle of two “gringos” standing atop a tin roof pointing and looking around. Community members initially failed to understand what this sort of exercise could possibly have to do with a program to improve their health. But the maps soon became symbolic in other ways. In communities that had never been charted on paper, the maps provided a newfound sense of place and pride. “You can see where your house is and that makes you feel good,” said one community member. “And anybody can find us here with the map, no matter where they’re from.”

The enthusiasm generated by the maps bodes well for the implementation of PRIME II’s intervention, which will tap into the vibrant culture of the *bateyes* through the health promoters and the popular medium of local radio. In collaboration with the Dominican Institute for Community Action, PRIME is training 35 promoters in reproductive health skills using a



curriculum developed by project partners Intrah, PATH and TRG that emphasizes the promoters' role in family planning education, community-based provision of family planning methods, and HIV/STI prevention. The radio programs, covering specific topics in reproductive health, will be followed by community discussions led by the promoters.

If, as Ms. Feliciano hopes, the maps generate additional development projects to help the impoverished and neglected *bateyes*, then they will have succeeded as a mini-intervention of their own: a fortuitous synergy of improved reproductive health care and community identity and empowerment.

*The PRIME II Project works around the world to strengthen the performance of primary-care providers as they strive to improve family planning and reproductive health services in their communities.*

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